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Employment hits 13 million - recovers to pre-COVID level

Media Release

Released 18/03/2021

i Source: [Labour Force, Australia, February 2021](#)

Seasonally adjusted employment increased by 89,000 people between January and February 2021 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Employment and hours worked

Bjorn Jarvis, head of labour statistics at the ABS, said this latest data showed continued recovery in the labour market into February, particularly for women.

"The strong employment growth this month saw employment rise above 13 million people, and was 4,000 people higher than March 2020.

"Full-time employment increased by 89,000 people, of which 69,000 were women. Female full-time employment was 1.8 per cent higher than March 2020, while male full-time employment was 0.8 per cent below."

Seasonally adjusted hours worked bounced back in February, increasing by 6.1 per cent, following the 4.9 per cent fall in January, when more Australians than usual took leave.

Hours worked were 0.7 per cent below the level seen in March 2020, reflecting a 94 per cent recovery in the fall in hours between March and May. Hours worked by women were 0.6 per cent above March 2020, while hours worked by men were 1.6 per cent below.

"Hours worked increased across all of the states and territories, except for in Western Australia, where hours were affected by the lockdown in the first week of February," Mr Jarvis said.

Participation, unemployment and underemployment

The participation rate remained at 66.1 per cent, with the female participation rate increasing 0.3 percentage points to 61.4 per cent and the male participation rate falling by 0.2 percentage points to 71.0 per cent.

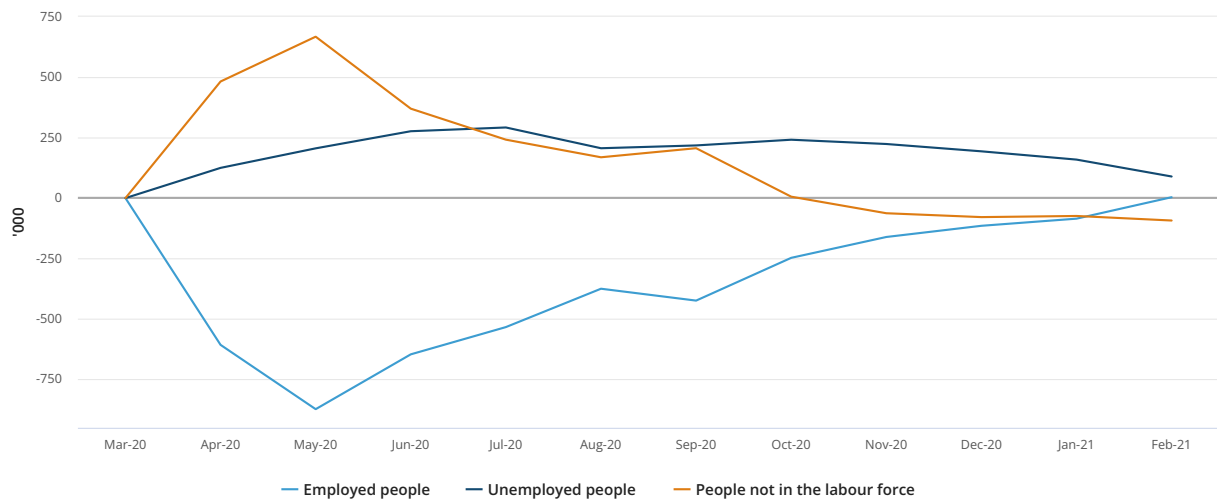
Unemployment decreased by 70,000 people (8%) in February. The unemployment rate declined by 0.5 percentage points to 5.8 per cent (from a revised January figure of 6.3 per cent). The unemployment rate remained 0.6 percentage points above March 2020, with around 89,000 more unemployed people.

The youth unemployment rate declined by 1.1 percentage points to 12.9 per cent, underpinned by a strong increase in the number of employed young women, up by 31,000 people.

Underemployment increased by 0.4 percentage points to 8.5 per cent in February, having fallen more than usual in January, to remain around its pre-pandemic level.

The underutilisation rate, which combines unemployment and underemployment, decreased by 0.1 percentage point to 14.4 per cent. This was 0.3 percentage points above March 2020, and 5.8 percentage points below its peak in May 2020.

Cumulative monthly changes in key labour force populations since March 2020, Australia



Today's release includes additional analysis of hours worked, including people working zero hours and analysis of the changes over time in female employment.

Further information, including regional labour market information, will be available in the upcoming February 2021 issue of [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release/\)](/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release/), due for release on Thursday 25 March 2021.

The ABS would like to thank Australians for their continued support in responding to our surveys during such a difficult time.

Media notes

- People in the Labour Force are either employed, or unemployed. In order to be unemployed, people must be actively looking for work, and available to start work during the reference week.

- The 'youth' age group refers to 15-24-year olds.
- The numbers in the media release are rounded to the nearest thousand people. For more detailed numbers see the data downloads tab in the [Labour Force, Australia \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release) publication.
- The ABS has suspended publishing trend series for the COVID-19 period.
- Further information on additional labour market statistics can be found in '[Measuring the labour market impacts of COVID-19 \(https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/Measuring%20Labour%20Market%20COVID19\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/Measuring%20Labour%20Market%20COVID19)'; part of the suite of information available on the ABS website.
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